

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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PRESS RELEASE

GEORGE INNESS: AN AMERICAN LANDSCAPE PAINTER
August 21 - October 6, 1985

George Inness: An American Landscape Painter, an exhibition of fifty-seven paintings by George Inness (1825-1894), opens at The Cleveland Museum of Art on August 21. The retrospective exhibition, the first presented to a national audience in nearly forty years, offers a panorama of Inness masterpieces and shows his development from a highly detailed style to an increasingly free and expressive one, culminating in richly colored near-abstractions. It closes October 6.

George Inness has long been regarded as one of 19th-century America's most original, prolific, and, perhaps, modern painters. He grew up in New York City and Newark, New Jersey, and, except for a brief apprenticeship with an engraver and one month's study with a landscape painter, was self-taught. He exhibited at the National Academy of Design when he was nineteen and opened his New York studio two years later, in 1846. On trips to Europe in 1851 and 1853, he indulged his deep interest in the compositional structure, tonal effects, and printing techniques of the Old Masters and came under the influence of the Barbizon School of landscape painting.

A contemporary of such Hudson River School figures as Frederick Edwin Church and Sanford Gifford, his aims and methods were quite different from theirs. Whereas those more critically acclaimed landscape painters presented the American wilderness as manifestation of the divinity of creation and the link to a primal past, Inness was interested in nature tamed by human cultivation. He remained convinced that the "civilized landscape" could best communicate human sentiment.

Gradually, as collectors and critics came to admire the poetic intensity of his forms and color, Inness's reputation increased. This intensity resulted in part from his

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religious faith; a devoted follower of the 18th-century Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg, Inness embraced the belief that all material objects have spiritual significance.

Returning to the States in 1875 after a five-year sojourn in Italy and France, Inness began to make some of his most magnificently expressive landscapes, inspired by the White Mountains and the countryside near Medfield, Massachusetts. His cultivated landscapes of that period offer a wide range of effects, with nature transcendent in its radiance or brooding under a storm's approach. Through the last decade of his life, when his work anticipated the Post-Impressionist position that the formal means and physical materials of art can represent beauty and meaning without representing reality, he became even more a painter of poetic imagination. When asked where he had painted a picture, he is reputed to have answered, "Nowhere in particular; do you suppose I illustrate guide books?"

Visitors may attend gallery talks in the exhibition at 1:30 pm on August 21 and 25 and on October 2 and 6; a slide tape which runs continuously Sunday afternoon 1:30 to 4:30 pm on August 25; and lectures on American landscape painting and George Inness at 2:15 pm on September 4 and 11. A 213-page catalogue reproduces the exhibition in color and is available at the Bookstore for \$22.50. It was supported by The Henry Luce Foundation, Inc. through the Luce Fund for Scholarship in American Art.

The exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and made possible by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and Mr. and Mrs. Meredith J. Long. The Cleveland showing, coordinated by William S. Talbot, is assisted by a grant from the Ohio Arts Council.

The exhibition comes to Cleveland from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and will travel to The Minneapolis Institute of Arts (November 10-January 12, 1986), the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (February 20-May 11), and the National Gallery of Art (June 22-September 7).